



The Sunshine Fire Protection District Newsletter

Letter from the Chief By Michael Schmitt

Dear Sunshine Residents,

An issue has been repeating itself where our firefighters or an ambulance respond to a home in Sunshine Canyon, and neighbors start gathering to “see what’s going on”. We understand that our residents are close to one another and sometimes curious. The care for our friends gets a hold of us and questions are asked that our firefighters are unable, and not legally permitted, to answer thanks to HIPAA. Unfortunately, this has not only put our fire fighters into a predicament. This can also cause discomfort to the patient who needs and deserves privacy! Fire fighters can’t be trying to balance the response for the patient while facing public questions that can’t be answered. In two instances this has also caused for the ambulance to be slowed down and in one case being stopped by

a resident who stood in the middle of the road with arms raised facing the ambulance asking “what is going on!?”. Please be aware that if you have questions, we cannot answer them. We don’t want to involve law enforcement due to a resident causing delays in response but will if needed. Please don’t stop us from doing our job. Thank you.

Summer is winding down, leaves will soon turn, and before we know it, snow will be in the forecast.

As of July 31, 2026, SFPD has responded to 118 calls.

Structural, car, & wildland
fire/smoke reports – 17
Vehicle/Bike Accident – 14
Medical/Medical Assist – 53
Hazardous Conditions - 11
Rescue - 3
No emergency/Autom. Alarm
Activated - 13

With the changing seasons, it is easy to become complacent. We ask that you remain attentive to your property by clearing tall grasses, removing debris, and keeping flammables away from your home to maintain proper fire mitigation. Our fire season is dateless and is particularly active in September and October.

Living in our beautiful rural area comes with unique responsibilities. If you have lived here for years, I encourage you to share your wisdom with new neighbors—pass along the practical tips and anecdotes that have kept you safe.

As you tackle annual property maintenance and prepare for winter, there are several key items that are crucial for the safety of our entire community:

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Letter from the Chief - Cont

By Michael Schmitt

1. Emergency Vehicle Access: Is Your Driveway Ready? A poorly maintained driveway is one of the biggest obstacles we face during an emergency. Our fire engines are significantly longer, wider, and heavier (40,000–50,000 lbs) than a standard vehicle and have a much higher center of gravity. To ensure we can reach you when you need us most, please verify your driveway meets the Boulder County Emergency Vehicle Access Standard:

- Width: Minimum of 12 feet, with an additional 2 feet of shoulder on each side.
- Vertical Clearance: At least 13 feet and 6 inches, free of overhanging branches.
- Grade: No more than 12–16%, depending on the length.
- Surface: A graded, well-maintained surface that is cleared of snow and ice in the winter.
- Pullouts: Spaced approximately every 400 feet (though this can vary depending on the curvature of the road).

While achieving perfect physical space is difficult on older mountain driveways, overgrown vegetation is our most common obstacle. Please keep trees trimmed and ensure driveway pullouts and wide turns remain clear.

These areas are designed for emergency vehicles to maneuver and are not intended for parking cars, RVs, or trailers.

Tip for Snow Removal: If you rely on a snow removal service, now is the time to make those calls.

Coordinate with your neighbors to request group pricing—contractors often prefer plowing adjacent driveways rather than driving miles between customers. If you would like us to visit and assess your driveway's accessibility for our engines, please let me know!

2. Can We Find You? Clear House Numbers In an emergency, seconds count. Ensure your house number is large, reflective, and clearly visible from the main road, day or night. Overgrown grass, shrubs, or decorative rocks can easily obscure signs. Clear signage is vital not only for us but also for our partners at the Boulder County Sheriff's Office and AMR ambulances.

3. Winter Travel and Preparedness Emergency services always ask residents to avoid traveling during severe winter weather unless it is truly necessary. When you must travel, the Colorado Department of

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IMPORTANT WINTER ASH & COAL SAFETY NOTICE

- The ONLY proper method of disposing of ashes and coals is to put them in a metal container with a lid that is designed for that task, then drown them with water.
- The ONLY way to know if they are cool is if you can put your hand in the coals/ashes, all the way to the bottom, without your hand getting hot.

NEVER dispose of warm or hot ashes on your deck.

NEVER cover ashes with snow regardless of where they are placed.

Letter from the Chief - Cont

By Michael Schmitt

Transportation (CDOT) is an excellent resource. Their website

(<https://www.codot.gov/travel/winter-driving/winter-preparedness>) provides highly practical winter driving and preparation tips.

4. Burn Permits: A Partnership for Safe Burning

The Sunshine Fire Protection District (SFPD) requires a local burn permit in addition to the one issued by Boulder County. This allows us to connect directly with residents about safe burning practices and avoids unintended 911 calls. Our goal isn't to prohibit fires, but to prevent wildfires. We've seen everything from hot fireplace coals tossed in dry grass to campfires built and lit under trees in 25 mph winds. The SFPD permit process includes a property visit to assess your situation and offer guidance. This simple step has prevented many high-risk fires in the past.

5. Smoke & CO Detectors Please test your detectors monthly, change the batteries annually, and clear away dust. Check the expiration date on the back of the units and replace them as needed. We have recently responded to several calls where functioning CO detectors alerted families just in time and saved lives. I cannot stress the importance of these inexpensive devices enough. Please.

A different kind of preparation is the qualification to provide quality CPR. Please sign up for our CPR class when you can, or let us know what times if it is not a weekend day would be more suitable to you. In our dreams we imagine every resident being CPR certified. Why? The simple answer is that you live in a rural area, and especially in inclement weather responses can be delayed, and your family member's survival will depend on what YOU are able to do. Sign up for our class or let us know what we need to do to make it

happen for you.

I want to express my deep gratitude to the incredible people who keep our fire department running so well.

Earlier this spring, we finally celebrated **Lin Ballard's** retirement. Lin officially retired during the pandemic, but we were thrilled to finally be able to formally thank her for over 50 years of service. Her life reads like an adventure novel—from working in the German Alps (I'd call where she was "Heidi's backyard") to becoming a ski patroller in the late 1960s after an American military patroller recognized her potential. Lin has collected endless awards, including induction into the Nordic Ski Patrol Hall of Fame and a Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for her countless hours of volunteer service. We truly have a celebrity among our ranks. Thank you, Lin!



Board members, Firefighters and their families celebrating Lin

Firefighter **J Hill** has also recently resigned as he prepares to move out of the area. After responding to 500 emergency calls, J has decided it is time to move on to greener pastures. Anyone who knows J can attest

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Letter from the Chief - Cont

By Michael Schmitt

that his absolute passion for providing the best possible patient care is hard to find. His commitment to service clearly runs in the family, with both of his sons pursuing careers in emergency response (one as a firefighter and one as a Sheriff's Deputy). We will miss his dedication deeply. Thank you, J!

Finally, thank you to **Braedon Blumfield** for his three years of service going on wildland dispatch with SFPD. Braedon applied his background in political science to bring a unique and highly valuable approach to several wildland dispatches. He is now starting a new position in NYC, and we know he will thrive there. Stay safe in the big city, Braedon, keep the pockets empty!

Last but definitely not least, there is **Emily Gebhardt**. If you talk to our firefighters, they will tell you that Emily has had a big impact on motivating our firefighters with her food. It's best if she makes it (uhm, homemade cupcakes or cookies at a training?... yes!), but whether she made it or she organized an external vendor, the food was top notch and our firefighters knew that after a long training with no

breaks that they will enjoy the meal that follows. On top of that, Emily has been the lead organizer of our community events. Without her, our wine tasting or community fest would not have happened. A lot of people help with these events, but Emily has been leading the charge and making our events better. We will miss her care for our community events, and are thankful that she plans to stay on for now for the firefighter training food organization, for which she can also use help. People like Emily are the reason when a community functions well, and we need more people that get involved. If you are interested in helping with training food or help organizing community events, please get in touch with Emily or myself. Thank you, Emily!

If you have any questions for me, please feel free to reach out via email. **However, if it is an emergency, never call or text me directly—always call 9-1-1.**

Michael Schmitt

Chief, Sunshine Fire Protection District

Save the Date:



4th Annual SFPD Wine-Tasting Fundraiser Distinctive Wines of the Southern Hemisphere

Friday, November 6th from 6-9pm
Sunshine Schoolhouse



Keep an eye on your inbox for more details, ways to participate, and options to purchase tickets.

Interested in helping with this year's event? We'd love to have you.

Contact Emily Gebhardt (emilydreyer@hotmail.com).

CWPP Committee Update

By Abby Silver & Alan Kirton

Our hot dry winter has been followed by a hot dry spring and early summer. Even with the recent rains, fuels are crunchy, and wildfire danger is still ranging from high to extreme. With these conditions, it's as important as ever to keep wildfire mitigation efforts top of mind.

During a major wildfire event, it is unlikely that there will be a fire engine parked at your house providing structure protection. Your house will burn or not burn based on whether you have done the home hardening and wildfire mitigation necessary to allow it to survive when the fire burns through your property. The Colorado State Forest Service has produced a Home Ignition Zone Guide which you can find at https://csfs.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021_CSFS_HIZGuide_Web.pdf and a Home Ignition Zone Checklist located on the following web page <https://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/protect-your-home-property-from-wildfire/home-ignition-zone-checklists/> to help you prepare your home for wildfire.

Creating defensible space around your home not only reduces the likelihood of flames spreading from the forest to your house, it also prevents your house fire from spreading to the adjacent forest and affecting neighboring houses. Fuels mitigation is designed to limit fire intensity and spread when (not if) fire returns to our landscape. Similarly, hardening homes and structures against embers can prevent that initial ignition. Individual mitigation efforts are important, but when they are aggregated across the community, that's where true resiliency exists. Thanks for being part of this important effort!

Fall Chipping Event October 19-22:

Fall chipping is scheduled to take place October 19-22.

This event will be paid for by our SFPD CWPP tax funds as Wildfire Partners has already maxed out their budget for these types of events for 2026. Look for emails to land in your inbox in mid-September with details on signing up. If possible, please wait until mid-September to start cutting trees to minimize the impact from Mountain Pine Beetle. David Battany (dbattany@guildmortgage.net) will be organizing the event.

Please remember to consolidate your piles to the greatest degree possible, and to stage them with all cut ends facing the road but located several feet off the roadway. Even better, locate them at the back of a pull-out so that the chipping trucks have room to pull in completely.

Community Number Signs – Josh Schoenfeld took the lead on replacing posts and/or number signs that had been damaged over the winter. About 30 posts and 10 signs were replaced. Thanks so much Josh for making this happen!

Dry Gulch North Fuels Reduction Project – Underway

Many of you will have noticed the crew working on the Dry Gulch North fuels reduction project along Sunshine Canyon between 3700 and 4100. The project is mitigating 57 acres across 11 properties. The crew has completed about two thirds of the project and the work is expected to be completed by mid-October 2026. The project is being funded by federal, state, and county grants.

What's Up With Xcel?

Many of us have noticed that Xcel's contractors

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CWPP Committee Update - Cont

(Wright Trees) have been chopping branches and removing trees along their utility easement. If you are a homeowner who is contacted by Xcel and offered a choice of full tree removal vs “trimming”, we encourage you to choose the full removal. Most trees that are “trimmed” based on proximity to utility poles are destined to die in a few years, at which point they often become hazard trees that the homeowner or fire district is forced to deal with.

Financial Incentives for Wildfire Mitigation:

There are financial incentives available to SFPD residents to help offset the costs of wildfire mitigation projects.

- Start with a free Wildfire Partners individual home assessment. Which can be found at <https://wildfirepartners.org/west-boulder-county/individual-home-assessments/>
- Anyone who is enrolled in that program is eligible for up to a \$2000 matching award for forestry

work from Wildfire Partners if you hire a contractor from their approved list.

- SFPD is also offering up to an additional \$1000 match for completing any action items in the report that are Recommended or Required. Receipts and before and after photos will be needed. Reach out to Abby abberoo@msn.com with any questions. A WP assessment is a requirement for SFPD residents to qualify.

Great Reads: SFPD Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

Sunshine has partnered with our neighboring fire protection districts of Four Mile, Sugar Loaf and Gold Hill to create a joint Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The four districts make up the Boulder West Wildfire Authority (BWWA). The BWWA CWPP (see https://www.sunshinefpd.org/_files/ugd/a30c56_791e21852afd4fa7a3ac2a8639635030.pdf), which was completed in 2023, is posted on the SFPD website.



SFPD Firefighter Spence, Andy, Caleb and Rick, with Bart enjoying Eldorado Springs water after extinguishing a small Wild Fire. Thank You Eldorado Springs and Cathy Shoenfeld for supporting our firefighters and community events.

Special Thanks & Open Position:

Thank You Emily Gebhardt you have been our energizer bunny over numerous years hosting and planning our community events. Starting the beginning of 2027, Emily will be stepping down from this position. If you are interested in filling or co-chairing the Events coordinator position please reach out to Dick Smith at chair@sunshine-fpd.org

Historical Sunshine Art & Craft Fair



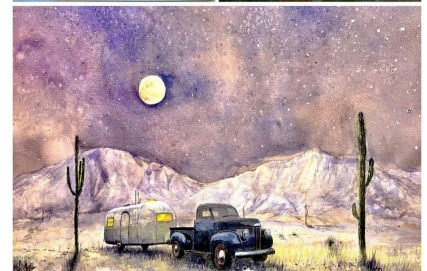
Historic Sunshine Art and Crafts Fair One day only!!

Saturday, October 3, 2026
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Sunshine School House
387 County Rd. 83, Boulder, CO 80302

Artwork, Fine Arts, Crafts, Jewelry, Pottery, Repurposed Materials,
Vintage Tie-Dye, Honey, Baked Goods, Candles,
Delightful Conversations, Community Enrichment, and More!

10 percent of vendors sales go to the Sunshine Historical Society



Are you planning to burn slash this winter?

If so, you need two burn permits, one from the county and one from SFPD.

- Boulder County Permit information: <https://www.bouldercounty.org/safety/fire/burn-permits/>
- SFPD Permit: <http://www.sunshine-fpd.org/downloads/Slash-burn-permit-v4.pdf>

Sunshine FPD Board News

Dick Smith, Dan Fischer, Jennifer Newton, Bill Stahl, and Marc Kohler

This has been an interesting, but busy summer. In addition to a great Community festival held at the Star House, the Board's activities have included equipment upgrades via funding from 2 grants, the cistern installation projects, and adopting a Wildfire Resiliency Code.

This spring the Department purchased 2 new truck chassis, courtesy of a 1B grant funded by Boulder County, to replace our brush trucks (4532 and 4545). Chief Schmitt and crew will be transferring the firefighting platform of the old trucks to these new chassis sometime this fall. This 'truck swap' (which was a Chief Schmitt brainstorm) will result in considerable long-term cost savings as it will extend the lifetime, while also upgrading the 2 trucks. If you haven't yet seen the new vehicles stop by sometime and have a look. Additionally, in July we were notified that a 2026 Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant was funded. This is a \$24K matching grant that will be used, in part, to equip 4535 with a new pump.

There has been a lot of progress moving forward with our water availability plan to install several new cisterns. Alan Kirton has put in an incredible amount of time devoted to this effort and we are all extremely thankful for his contribution. As you may be aware, a lot of the work in constructing and installing a new cistern site is done behind the scenes. That involves surveying, designing, obtaining approval, and contractor bidding even before breaking ground at an installation site. The approval process itself can take more than a year to work its way through the Boulder County requirements. Currently, in various stages, we are working on 3

community cisterns and the fire hydrant on CR 83. The latter will be a buried line down from Station 2. One of the planned community cisterns will be a 20K gallon cistern located on Whispering Pines. Easement access to the site has been completed and the site has been surveyed and is nearly ready for detailed designing. A second planned community cistern will contain 40K gallons and will be located on Bald Mountain Open Space property. The approval process for that one is even more extensive as it first requires a green light from Boulder Parks and Open Space Department for easement access before it can then be submitted to Boulder County Planning & Permitting Department for a Limited Impact Special Review, as required by the Boulder County Land Use Code for all fire district cisterns. The third cistern along the 1100 block of CR 83 is further along. Construction design is nearly completed and quotes for final costs will soon be sought both for the cistern and a hydrant line from the cistern down to CR 83.

In 2025, the Colorado legislature passed a mandatory requirement that all local entities, which includes fire districts, develop and (or) adopt a Wildfire

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Board Meetings: The 2nd Tuesday of the month at Fire Station #1 from 6:30 - 8:30 PM. These meetings are always open to the public, and our agenda leaves time for public comment and input.

Sunshine FPD Board News - Continued

Resiliency Code (WRC). The specifications for a WRC, as listed in the statutes, were included in a WRC developed by the State of Colorado (to see the code go to <https://dfpc.colorado.gov/colorado-wildfire-resiliency-code>). SFPD had the option of developing our own code or adopting or amending the State WRC. Required inclusions in a code were wildfire hazard identification (including wildfire mapping), structure hardening requirements, site and area requirements, inspection, and code enforcement. After consulting with our lawyers, other fire districts, and Boulder County, the Sunshine Board adopted an unamended version of the State WRC. However, Boulder County has adopted a building code that is stricter than the State WRC. The Boulder County code will supersede that portion of the State WRC within

our District. As of this writing, inspection and enforcement of the WRC at the District level remain unresolved. The State has indicated that Fire Districts who wish to 'employ' the State for enforcement of the WRC will need to apply, but has only recently released the procedure for how to do it. There is more than one enforcement option available for State enforcement. The Board will be dealing with enforcement and inspection options in subsequent meetings. It is clear that we will have a duality: WRC building code enforcement will be handled by Boulder County, while the wildfire component of the WRC will likely be enforced by the State.

Dick Smith - Board Chair



Thank You

A heartfelt thank you to our fabulous neighbors Emily Gebhardt, Lila Tresemer, Debbie Burns, Ed Burns, Jim Paschis, Josh & Cathy Shoenfeld and Dana Matthews for planning a wonderful Sunshine Community Fest at the Star House. Also, special thanks to John Bauer for auctioneering and providing many laughs.

SFPD OFFICERS

Chief - Michael Schmitt
(303) 246-4519
chief@sunshine-fpd.org

Deputy Chief - Henry Ballard
(303) 449-8619
deputy-chief@sunshine-fpd.org

Fire Marshal -
Michael Johnson - (775) 790-2662
marshal@sunshine-fpd.org

Deputy Fire Marshal -
Paul Hourihan - (303) 551-3443
pthourihan@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair - Dick Smith
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Bill Stahl (720) 775-2057

**COMMUNITY WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)****Co-Chairs**

Abby Silver - abberoo@msn.com
Alan Kirton - alanj.kirton@gmail.com

Other Volunteer Positions

Deputy Treasurer -
Stephanie O'Hearn
stephanie@drnuzzi.com

Events Coordinators -
Open Position starting 2027

SFPD's Website:
www.sunshinefpd.org

SFPD Phone #
303.786.7731

Instagram -
[@sunshinefire.boulder.colorado](https://www.instagram.com/sunshinefire.boulder.colorado)

Are you ready to Volunteer for SFPD?

We are always looking for dedicated individuals to become auxiliary department members as Quartermaster, grant writers, station cleaners and organizers, event managers/support and equipment managers. Please contact **Michael Schmitt** at chief@sunshine-fpd.org if interested.

SFPD Communications:

To receive SFPD email communications or to update your email address for both urgent and non-urgent SFPD business please contact chief@sunshine-fpd.org.

Directory:

The Community Directory is available on our Sunshine website. To make changes or for instructions and password please email directoryupdates@sunshine-fpd.org. It is password-protected for security. This directory is for just our community, please do not share it outside of our community

Sunshine Community Forum:

As a way to keep our Sunshine community connected, we created a special Google Group called the Sunshine Community Forum. It's a private group that allows all our neighbors to post non-commercial topics and respond to others. If you would like to join or have questions about this group, please contact John Bauer at JRBauer01@gmail.com.

Comments or suggestions for next newsletter contact:
Jennifer Lansky at 303.442.2709 or jen@lansky.cc